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LONDON AND PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHERS

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SUBJECT: NEW CHAD CABINET: KEEP YOUR FRIENDS CLOSE, YOUR
ENEMIES CLOSER

REF: NDJAMENA 195

¶1. (SBU) President Deby's new cabinet, announced on March 4, features eight new ministers. The new cabinet has several notable characteristics. Some 13 percent have participated in the international visitors program and one is a former USAID employee. For the first time in recent memory, the cabinet contains no Arabs, but does contain a record number of women. Finally, Deby's announcement of former rebel leader Mahamat Nour as Minister of Defense took many people by surprise. Question marks for us are how Deby's loyal supporters will respond to the appointment of Nour and the appointment's implications for political dialogue between Deby and his other rebel adversaries.

¶2. (U) The new Ministers of the cabinet are:

Prime Minister: Dr. Nourradine Coumakoye Delwa Kassire

Minister of Defense: M. Mahamat Nour Abdelkerim

Minister of Agriculture: M. Haroun Kabbadi (former National Coordinator of the Chad Petroleum Project)

Minister of Public Health: Avockssouma Djona

Minister of National Education: M. Abderamane Koko

Minister of City Planning: M. Mahamat Abdoulaye Mahamat

Minister of Human Rights: Mme Fatime Issa Ramadan

Minister Secretary General of Government: M. Kalzeube Payimi Deubet

¶3. (U) Retention of the heavy hitters include:

Minister of Infrastructure: Adoum Younousmi

Minister of Mines and Energy: Mahamat Ali Abdallah Nassour

Foreign Minister: Ahmat Allam-Mi

Minister of Interior: Ahmat Mahamat Bachir

Minister of Finance and Information: Abbas Mahamat Tolli

¶4. (SBU) Deby surprised observers) both Chadian and foreign) by appointing former rebel leader Mahamat Nour as the Minister of Defense. In the past, Deby,s fellow Zaghawa (who are highly represented in the Army) have resisted fiercely giving up benefits and privileges they enjoy. Nour, a ethnic Tama, has been described as bright and well organized. Trained in France and Senegal, Nour stutters but is proficient in French and Arabic. To many Chadians, the President was using the technique of &keeping your friends close, but your enemies closer8 with his appointment of Nour. Chad news sites report that a petition is being circulated through the high ranks of the military to protest the appointment, with threats of ousting Nour or fomenting some sort of internal military action against him. Regardless of how the Nour appointment plays in N,djamena, it is likely that the President will continue to act as the de facto minister of defense and all sides will be watching closely to see how Nour addresses the ongoing violence in Dar Tama.

¶5. (U) Tripoli minimize considered.
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